

WISCONSIN

School News

June-July 2022 | wasb.org

Official publication of the Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Inc.



Menomonee Falls High School's reconfigured career and technical education space brings multiple trades into one room, allowing a single teacher to supervise students working in any area.

SPECIALTY Spaces

How rethinking the design of career and technical education spaces can engage students in the trades



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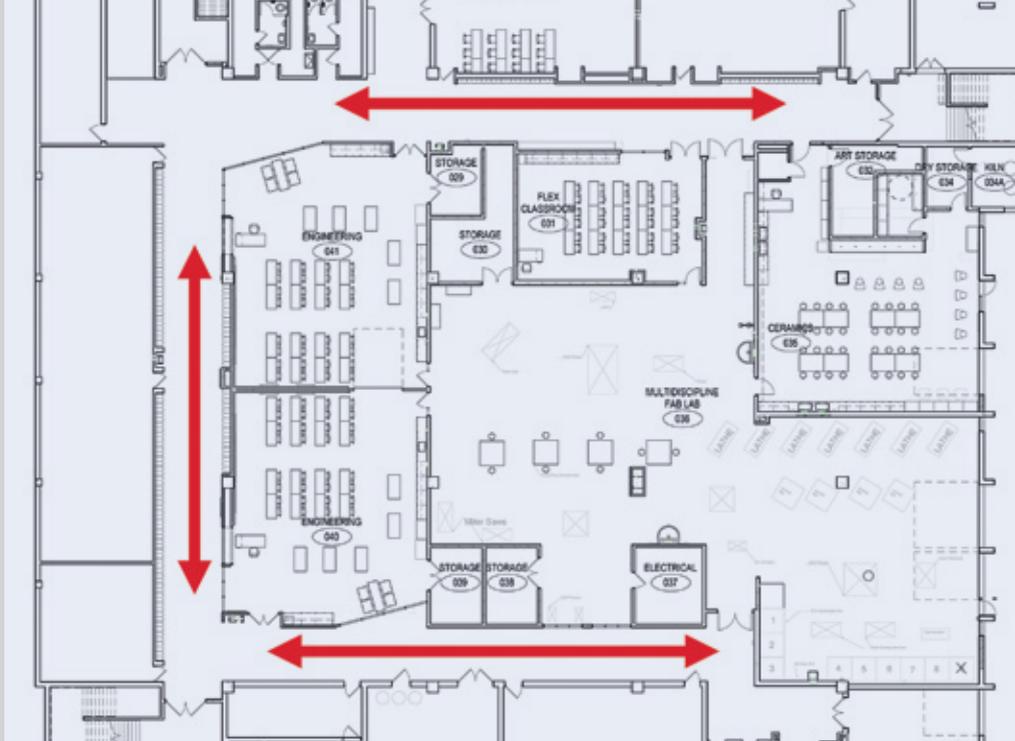
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Green Bay-Area Districts Start Healthcare Academy

Three northeast Wisconsin school districts are working with a local college to start a healthcare academy allowing high school students to earn up to 42 college credits, Fox 11 News reports.

The Bellin College Healthcare Academy will be available to students in the Luxemburg-Casco, Denmark and Kewaunee districts. The classes, most of which will occur remotely, will be taught by the staff at Bellin College.

Classes include Introduction to Healthcare, Medical Terminology, Customer Service in Healthcare, Health Communication and Nursing Assistant. They begin this August.

“The goal of this is to shorten the amount of time they’re in college, reduce the amount of cost for the student, because the cost per credit is reduced, and so if everything works out perfectly, they could be out in two years after they graduate,” Luxemburg-Casco School District Director of Learning Services Michael Snowberry told the TV station.

In addition to jumpstarting the academic career of students, the academy is also part of a solution to a shortage of healthcare workers, Bellin Health Director of Orthopedics and Sports Medicine Phil Schaible said.

“There’s just not enough people choosing to go into healthcare,” he said. “And with the pandemic, things were made worse.” □

More Students Are Chronically Absent

The number of chronically absent students rose by 25% in the 2020-21 school year, according to data from the Department of Public Instruction.

A student is deemed chronically absent when they are enrolled for at least 90 days and miss more than 10% of school days.

“Even after students returned to class in person, the disruption to school day

Most Wisconsinites Satisfied With Public Schools

Sixty-three percent of Wisconsin residents are either satisfied or very satisfied with public schools in their community, according to a Marquette Law School poll from late April.

The poll, which has asked this question for a decade, found the percentage of satisfied or very satisfied respondents is roughly stable since the question was asked last fall. It is down from the pre-pandemic high of 75%, in 2015.

Support for vouchers was correlated with school satisfaction. Respondents who were dissatisfied were 15 percentage points more

likely to support vouchers.

Given a choice between reducing property taxes or increasing school spending, respondents were split. Half said they prefer increasing spending on schools, 46% wanted to cut taxes and the final 4% didn’t know.

The percentage of respondents choosing the option to increase spending on public schools was down slightly from pre-pandemic polls.

The poll interviewed 805 registered voters by landline or cell from April 19 to 22. The margin of error is plus or minus 4.1 percentage points. □

STAT OF THE MONTH

63%

Percentage of Wisconsin residents who are satisfied or very satisfied with their local public schools. *Source: Marquette Law School poll*

TEACHER RETIREMENTS DROP 17 PERCENT

Wisconsin teacher retirements dropped 17% last school year, according to a report from Wisconsin Public Radio.

During the 2020-21 school year, 4,271 teachers retired, compared with 5,158 retirements in the preceding school year, WPR reported.

Fewer retiring teachers may relieve those who’d worried the pandemic would exacerbate the teacher shortage.

This finding is in line with earlier research from the Wisconsin Policy Forum, which found that principals and superintendents switched schools or left the profession at lower rates in 2021 compared with the year before.

Even with teachers staying in their role, Wisconsin has more projected teacher openings than its education schools can fill. □

students who are chronically absent find it harder to return to the classroom. Solving absenteeism is a problem for schools, but not only them, he said.

“This is going to take education years to recover from,” he said. “This is going to really take an effort on the part of our society to get this back where it should be, and working together to get kids back in school.” □



Knowing Our Roles

This April, the WASB again hosted gatherings of newly elected board members around the state. At the start of each meeting, we asked the same question: Why did you become a board member?

The answers tend to share a theme. You became a board member to help your community's kids. You may be passionate about specific issues, but you want children to reach their potential.

We ask this question because it reminds board members about their shared mission. While this camaraderie is crystal clear at our gatherings, it can be harder to remember later, during moments of disagreement.

The question of how a board member can best help kids is so large that I can't hope to answer it. But I can suggest a place to begin. Consider your role, the part that only you can play.

Whether you're part of a sports team, a business or a school district, any system is made up of people with specific functions, with roles. When roles become blurred, the system often fails to work.

What is the role of a school board? Again, that's a big question, but we can offer a starting point.

Governance is a way to think about your role. That shared mission of helping kids is sometimes called the "moral imperative," and it's a basic building block to understanding your role.

We suggest starting with a belief that all children can learn.

The standard elements of board service — making policies, setting a budget, hiring a district administrator — flow from your governance role. Understanding your role helps you stay effective.

It can be tempting for a board member to delve into operational issues typically in their superintendent's purview. But by acting in another's role, a board member is both weakening the ability of staff to succeed while distracting themselves from governance.

Board members sometimes remind us that this hands-off impulse can sometimes go too far. Just as expanding one's role can bring hazards, confining it into too small a box can pose its own problems.

These questions remind us that we, too, have a role at the WASB. It's our role to help you be as effective as you can, but we don't expect you to adhere to one standard.

After all, one of the roles of a school board member is to reflect the values of their community. Each community is different, so no single rulebook fits every board.

If you'd like some further guidance and discussion of these issues to find the right balance for you, I encourage you to attend our Summer Leadership Institute, held July 8-9 in La Crosse. There, a team of WASB consultants and expert speakers will examine what it means

to create a governance mindset and put it into practice for students.

Fortunately, the governance mindset is flexible enough to accommodate your vision and unite a board behind a shared moral imperative. We trust that a school board will put children's best interests as their North Star and navigate by that point. It's natural to disagree on strategy, but your board will work best if each member believes in their colleagues' commitment to kids.

Learn more about the connection between student success and governance teams on page 16.

This time of year, school board members are taking on new roles, especially the clerks, treasurers and presidents.

One more way we help you understand your role in these important officer positions is through our 16-webinar series on board officer roles. Part of the Online Learning Platform, and available in a separate subscription, these videos take you through the laws that apply to each role as well as suggestions to help you be effective.

Finally, please take some time to relax this summer. You've completed or are rounding the final lap of the second full school year since the pandemic began.

It's a good time to take a long-term view of your board's improvement, but don't forget to relax, too. You've earned it. ■

That shared mission of helping kids is sometimes called the "moral imperative," and it's a basic building block to understanding your role.



REPORT TO THE MEMBERSHIP

Built on a tradition of providing high-quality service to member districts, the WASB is proud to be at your service. With your membership, you have a statewide voice in public education and your district benefits from valuable member services. The following are highlights of the WASB's work for you in 2021-22.

LEGAL, POLICY & HUMAN RESOURCES

RESPONDED TO 4,718

Law-related inquiries from members in **355** school districts

PROVIDED TIMELY LEGAL UPDATES

through regular webinars, the monthly **Legal and Legislative Video Update** and the electronic **Legal and Policy Newsletter**

DEBUTED

CIVIL RIGHTS TRAINING SERIES

with nine modules intended for staff members who work with other employees and eight modules for staff members who work with students

UPDATED AND REVISED

numerous **WASB legal and policy publications**, including the New Board Member Handbook, the Employee Handbook, the Policy Resource Guide, The FOCUS, Policy Perspectives and the School District Election Schedule

UPDATED COVID-19 WEBPAGE

with timely updates and in-depth resources, including regarding federal COVID relief funds

CUSTOMIZED LEADERSHIP SERVICES

DIRECTLY SERVED 57 SCHOOL DISTRICTS

with **customized consultations** (e.g., leadership and roles and responsibilities, governance, leadership coaching, strategic planning and superintendent evaluation)

Assisted numerous other districts through informal consultations

Continued to provide districts with access to the **UPDATED ANNUAL BOARD DEVELOPMENT TOOL** at no cost in partnership with School Perceptions and helped districts set goals based on the results of the tool's survey

Trained districts in the **SUPERINTENDENT EVALUATION FRAMEWORK** to assist boards in fostering a productive relationship with their superintendent

Developed presentations for the Regional Meetings, January convention, Spring Workshops and the **SUMMER LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE**

WASB INSURANCE PLAN



Provided timely, insurance-related updates

THROUGH WEBINARS AND ELECTRONIC ALERTS

ADDED TO **ARCHIVAL LIBRARY** of insurance-related resources

SEARCH SERVICES

COMPLETED 12 SUCCESSFUL PERMANENT superintendent searches

COMPLETED 2 PERMANENT agency administrator searches

Aided numerous other districts through presentations and advice



HIGHLIGHTS OF 2021-22 SERVICES

By making so many programs and services available to you and your district, the WASB is an investment in your district's ability to meet your student achievement goals. Visit us online at [WASB.org](https://www.wasb.org) or contact the association toll-free at (877) 705-4422. The WASB is here to serve you.

ADVOCACY & GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

REVAMPED THE DELEGATE ASSEMBLY WEBPAGE

with videos and other information describing the Delegate Assembly, resolutions process and the work of the WASB Policy & Resolutions Committee



Provided oral or written testimony on at least **45 BILLS** and officially registered positions (support, opposition or neutral) on **79 BILLS**

Hosted a five-part online **LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY CONFERENCE** featuring invited guest speakers

TRACKED OVER **90 ASSEMBLY BILLS** and over **75 SENATE BILLS** related to K-12 education

SOCIAL MEDIA/MEMBER OUTREACH



AVERAGED 5,000 UNIQUE USERS

of the WASB website — [WASB.org](https://www.wasb.org) — each month

FOLLOWED BY MORE THAN **3,600 TWITTER USERS**
WASB tweets are seen, on average, more than **500 times per day**

FOLLOWED BY NEARLY **1,250 ON FACEBOOK**
users saw our posts a total of **23,813 times**, an **increase of 20%** from the year before

Continued releasing monthly episodes of the **WASB CONNECTION PODCAST**

RECOGNIZED **55 BUSINESSES** throughout Wisconsin on the **WASB Business Honor Roll**

MEETINGS & EVENTS

RECORDED **87 VIDEOS, WEBINARS, WORKSHOPS** and other online events that were **played 3,077 times**

Continued two recurring events to keep members updated about legislative and legal matters — a weekly **Capitol Chat** during the state budget debate and a monthly **Legal and Legislative Video Update** featuring WASB attorneys and lobbyists

ADDED TO THE **ONLINE LEARNING PLATFORM** with introductory and advanced modules to provide a comprehensive source of online governance and legal trainings for members

STATE EDUCATION CONVENTION

WELCOMED ABOUT **1,600 ATTENDEES** with **three general sessions**, more than **65 breakout sessions** and more than **235 exhibitors**

SPECIALTY Spaces



Enrollment in career and technical education classes remains stagnant in many Wisconsin schools. Could strategic architectural design choices bring students back?

The Baraboo High School tech education classroom

How better design of career and technical education learning spaces can engage students in the trades

by Teresa Wadzinski

When we think of school curriculum, we often envision traditional core classes like English, math, science and social studies. Maybe we also consider electives like art, music and foreign language. But what about all the other classes that expose students to non-traditional career or post-education paths?

Many schools offer career and technical education studies, such as robotics, manufacturing, culinary arts, automotive repair or agricultural classes. Many of these skilled trade or technical education pathways encourage students to seek out alternatives to college. Yet, year after year, enrollment rates in CTE centers remain stagnant.

Wisconsin technical and community colleges have seen a significant decline in student enrollment as well, in part due to the lack of interest starting at the high school level. Many public school districts are noticing that students are not signing up for CTE classes. This dilemma is crippling the traditional pipeline from high school to technical colleges. So, how can we improve enrollment and engagement in CTE classes? Strategic and impactful architectural design may be the answer.

Modern needs, old spaces

Careers in many CTE fields are technologically advanced and highly specialized, but you wouldn't know

it by the equipment and spaces in some high schools. Many of the technical education centers throughout Wisconsin high schools were built during a different era and are now outdated and ill-prepared to support student success. The space and the equipment have not changed, which can be a deterrent to engaging student interest in the trades, therefore limiting the pipeline of skilled labor post-high school.

aided through intentional space planning. Often only one technical education teacher is available to teach and supervise the cross-disciplinary trade subjects, resulting in a teacher-centric, rather than student-centric, model. This limited staff capacity can greatly limit the type of classes offered and the availability of programs. There are simple space layout strategies that can engage students and support teacher

Careers in many CTE fields are technologically advanced and highly specialized, **but you wouldn't know it by the equipment and spaces in some high schools.**

There is a huge difference between the performance of outdated equipment and modernized equipment fitted with 21st-century technology.

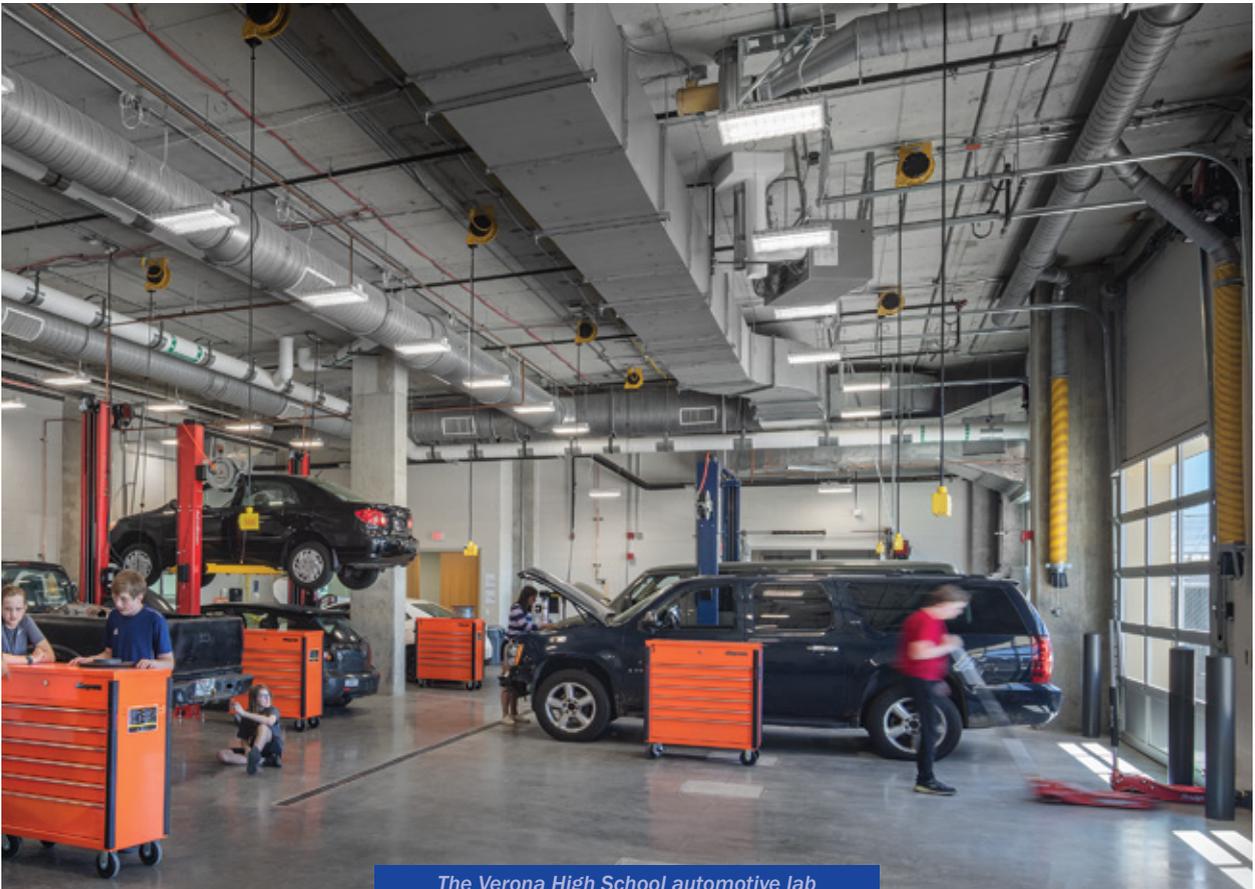
One barrier easily overcome by design is a lack of visibility. Students may see the value in career and technical education, but they don't see the education spaces available to them in these areas. Many CTE classrooms are housed in the basement or a wing of the school that students might never have exposure to. Housing these spaces and old equipment in low-light, traditional-style classrooms creates a less engaging environment for students and could further discourage enrollment in these programs.

Supervision is another obstacle that can easily be addressed and

supervision for CTE classes. Before jumping into that, the strategic difference between designing spaces for core classes and trade electives must be understood.

Rethinking the CTE classroom

Traditional classrooms are typically comprised of four walls, with either rows or groupings of desks or tables. A long, horizontal whiteboard or chalkboard is usually anchored to the front wall, although smart boards are expected in modern classrooms. It can be pictured so easily because it is the "all-American" scene displayed in movie classics like "Dead Poets Society," "Sixteen Candles" and probably "Ferris Bueller's Day Off" if he had not taken the day off. Whether the



The Verona High School automotive lab

class is conducted in a collaborative approach or as a lecture, the design does not often change. The same cannot be said for many different subjects that fall under CTE.

Career and technical education spaces are designed to teach students trade skills, such as how to repair a car, construct buildings or engineer working machinery. None of those spaces can be equally applied to the next. While an automotive class will need garage doors and vehicle lifts,



a construction class will need a variety of wood-cutting tools that cannot be stationed just anywhere, and a robotics class will need electrical and metal equipment.

Attempting to fit these specialty spaces into a traditional classroom lowers student enrollment and engagement in these trade studies. So, how can we effectively design career and technical education spaces to engage the next generation?

First and foremost, many career and technical education

Career and technical education spaces are designed to teach students trade skills, such as how to repair a car, construct buildings or engineer working machinery.

center enhancements are renovation projects rather than new construction. Many recent Eppstein Uhen Architects projects involving high school CTE centers have been renovations or additions. In the case of renovations, the first step is to assess the existing space and district-specific curriculum needs.

After an assessment, the next step is figuring out how to incorporate natural light. Oftentimes, CTE centers are found in lower levels or dimly lit areas of a school. With that comes the negative stigma associated with students walking to the less appealing areas of the school for their trade skills classes. Working in natural light has a profound impact on the mood of a space, and exposure to natural light has a positive influence on the concentration, energy levels and productivity of students and teachers. While natural light can be a fixed feature, the rest of the space should be adaptable to future changes.

Unlike core classes, electives change. Career and technical education classes are highly dependent on the school's staff, as CTE teachers can only teach and supervise curriculums that they are experts in. Not only are class offerings dependent on staff, but they will change depending on demand. For example, if an automobile repair program is declining due to severely low enrollment, but there is a surge of interest in robotics, the class offerings and space will need to adapt to meet demand. This means that any CTE center design must be strategically developed to accommodate adaptations for future classes.

One straightforward way to accomplish this is to ensure equipment is flexible and transportable — this includes electrical, mechanical and plumbing needs associated with unique equipment. While they may not be regularly moved, it is important to keep the space and everything in it flexible for reconfigurations. Installing electrical cord reels on the ceiling



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 – Meg Boyd, Principal

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Resources

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 –Tosha Womack, Former Principal, Brown Deer High School

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Menomonee Falls High School tech education classroom & corridor

facilitates flexible design as it allows for adjustable power supply sources when moving equipment and establishing different work zones. But more than anything, outside of safety, the career and technical education center must reflect the community and school district.

■ CTE renovation addresses local need

Designing a CTE center will never be a one-size-fits-all approach. Take, for instance, Menomonee Falls High School. The school's renovation project, conducted by EUA, was successful because the strategy behind the design was developed to address the unique needs of the district and student body.

Before its renovation, Menomonee Falls High School, built in 1967, dedicated its entire lower level to a multipurpose CTE class space. Each trade curriculum was squeezed into its own four-wall, traditional space and because there was only one technical education teacher, the subjects and



BEFORE



AFTER

class times were limited to accommodate what the teacher could supervise.

The challenge of signing up for the desired class at a time that fit in their schedule, coupled with the stigma of walking to a dark and dingy basement for any technical education class, hindered CTE enrollment. That changed in 2016, when the School District of Menomonee Falls approved a \$32.7 million referendum as part of its commitment to continuous improvement in CTE. An initial facilities assessment led to a complete renovation of the lower-level CTE and art spaces.

Working closely with staff and district administrators, EUA broke down walls and designed an open-concept, multi-purpose working space for student-centered education. By giving one teacher the ability to supervise multiple subjects at once, students had more options when it

came to projects and the times they could be properly supervised.

The reconfigured center allows students to work on cross-disciplinary projects alongside their peers. Even students in a free

period can utilize the space on their own time, making progress on their projects while another technical education class is being conducted. This is all made possible because the teacher can be present to serve as a resource for students and ensure safety protocols are followed. For instance, while one student is independently working on their woodworking project, an automobile class can be underway nearly 20 feet away, without a wall blocking their view. Not only is the space more efficient and student-based, but it's been brightened with strategic design decisions that bring in additional light.

Glass walls and garage doors created an inviting environment where students wanted to work and study. Not only did natural light enhance the mood of everyone who entered the space, but it created a



Baraboo High School art education classroom

connection to different classrooms. Because most of the space is open and any areas that were closed off now brandish glass walls, students can see what others are working on, sparking curiosity in other disciplines. Additionally, built-in hallway display cubbies allow students to show off their finished products. This enriches the hallway space, making the entire career and technical education lounge an innovation center.

The full renovation of the Career and Technical Center at Menomonee Falls High School concluded in the fall of 2017. Within the first school year of the renovations being complete, student enrollment in CTE classes increased by 15%. The district also noticed a significant increase in female CTE enrollment.

■ Sparking interest

While student enrollment in career and technical education classes is on the decline, it may not be an accurate indication of students' disinterest in trade skills.

In conjunction with districts championing the future impacts and career opportunities that come with CTE, the thoughtful and compelling design of these spaces can help boost enrollment. Understanding the school district and

the needs of the community, the entire space can be refreshed to drive student engagement.

With safety top of mind, outdated equipment can be replaced with 21st-century technology. Furnishings, versatile technology, and multi-use configurations can be utilized to make the space flexible for future changes. Natural light and increased visibility can be brought in to enhance the mood and energy levels of students and teachers.

Design considerations can impact the overall learning environment, and it is satisfying to see a unique and intentional design have a profound influence on student engagement within career and technical education. A robust and vibrant CTE center that inspires learners to develop skilled trades and prepare for the workforce can only serve to benefit students and our communities at large. ■

Teresa Wadzinski, LEED AP BD+C, NCARB, CDT, is the learning environments studio director at Eppstein Uhen Architects, an architecture, engineering and design firm headquartered in Milwaukee. Teresa shares the team's passion for designing environments to inspire and engage students and teachers.



Elkhorn Area High School art education classroom

Build Relationships With an

OUTWARD MINDSET



by Jo Miller



An inward mindset can orient you toward personal goals. An outward mindset focuses you on district objectives.

Our “why” for serving in education is to make a difference in the lives of young people. We all want future generations to be successful, feel secure and contribute to the Wisconsin community.

We may be in education for the same reason, but each of us has a unique path that led us here. Each of us has developed individual perspectives, ideas and plans for creating educational opportunities that we believe will be most beneficial for student success.

We may feel strongly committed to our own ideas, but governing and leading a school district does not happen at an individual level. No single person can know, see or understand the full scope of challenges and opportunities at all levels of a school district. Each person in a school district needs others to recognize the prospects, challenges, complexities and impacts beyond the limits of their own awareness.

Relationships

Effective relationships are part of the DNA of highly effective schools. Relationships among a school board, the superintendent, teachers, parents, students, the community, business owners and policymakers are all integral to the success of students.

The first step of relating to others is

thinking deeply about the other people in our lives — their plans, ideas and perspectives. We can purposefully build strong collaborative relationships centered on our shared goal of making a difference in the lives of young people by becoming intentional in how we relate to each other.

Seeing others

It is not always natural for us to consider how our ideas, perspectives and plans might impact others. We may be inclined to dismiss or diminish others when we are thinking about ourselves. The Arbinger Institute, a global training and consulting firm, calls this an “inward mindset.”

When we are in an inward mindset, others’ ideas, perspectives and plans may seem like barriers or challenges to our own. To be “inward” doesn’t mean we don’t care about others. It doesn’t mean we are selfish or mean. It simply means we are human.

When we are inward, we may start seeing the other person as getting in our way. We stop seeing the other person as a person with a perspective as important as our own. At that moment, we change from being motivated by our shared goal of making a difference in the lives of young people to being motivated to achieve our own individual ideas,

projects or methods. The shift into an individually motivated mindset can prevent or degrade collaborative relationships that are proven to be necessary for effective school district governance and leadership.

Changing our mindset to foster and build collaborative, helpful relationships is possible. We could deeply consider who and what our ideas, perspectives and plans might affect. We could ask, “What impact will I/this have on others?” and “Will this approach help things go right?” The Arbinger Institute calls this an “outward mindset.” Working with an outward mindset includes listening and learning from others with a perspective that they are just as important as us.

We each spend portions of our day within each mindset. Different situations may invite us to be more “inward” or more “outward” at any given time, considering others and our impact on them with varied concern. When we all work within an outward mindset, we become more focused on our shared district objective of improving outcomes for students instead of being focused on pushing through individual ideas, projects or methods.

Our impact on others

I’m going to give you an everyday example with similarities that pertain



To be “inward” doesn’t mean we don’t care about others. It doesn’t mean we are selfish or mean. **It simply means we are human.**



Jo Miller

to our professional experiences.

I borrowed my husband's truck to help my mom. It was a Sunday, and I was exhausted as I drove home thinking of going to work Monday morning. I glanced down at the fuel gauge, noticing the needle barely above empty. At that moment, I felt I should fill the gas tank. I quickly dismissed that thought as I considered how tired I was, the tasks that needed doing before I went to bed, and Monday morning's full work agenda. As I felt a pang of guilt for talking myself into not filling the gas tank, I needed to vilify my husband to relieve the guilt. I started thinking of reasons why I deserve not to fill the gas tank: he's retired, he had the whole day to himself, and why was there only a quarter tank of gas in the first place? I found fault with him to feel justified not doing the thing I felt I should do, which was to fill the darn gas tank.

All these thoughts happened in a split second, with very little conscious awareness. Also, my emotional state toward my husband started to deteriorate. I started telling myself my husband was selfish with a day to himself and perhaps a bit lazy in his retirement. I felt entitled to leave the gas tank close to empty. I wasn't only vilifying my husband; I was also creating a negative way of being within myself.

I showed up at home with a self-justified, inward mindset I created through my own thoughts. Who I was for my husband at that moment was created by me, not by him. I impacted my husband negatively that evening by showing

up at home in this heightened state of justification. He had done — and was doing — nothing wrong, but my own need to continue justifying my choice to not fill the gas tank caused me to continue finding fault with anything I could about my husband. Consequently, he felt the need to defend himself. Understandably, he reacted to me, mirroring my negativity. The result was an uneasy tension for the rest of the evening.

The Arbing Institute refers to the way we show up to others as our “way of being.” My way of being that evening impacted both my husband and our ability to regard each other respectfully. This happened simply because I needed to justify my own ideas and thoughts. I was the cause of the strain our relationship experienced that night.

I tell you this story because it is one in which we can all see ourselves, and it isn't pretty. The mindset I adopted in this story also plays itself out in professional relationships. When we adopt a

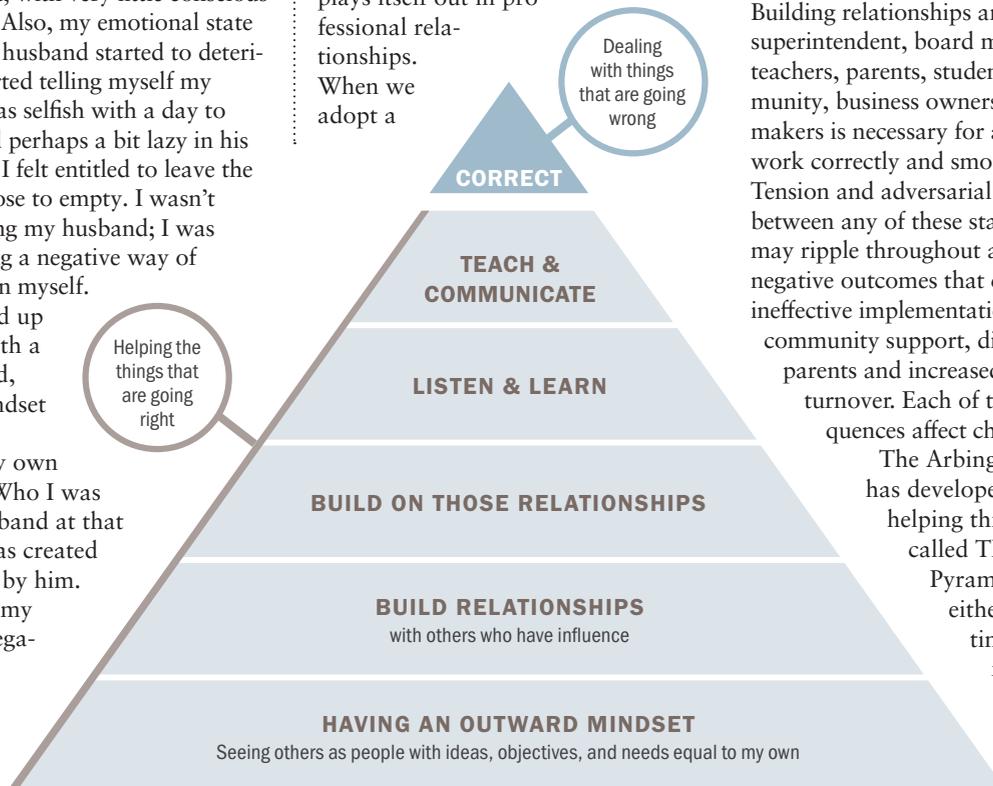
self-oriented inward mindset, the impact we have on others is to invite them to interact in ways where we both end up eliciting and reinforcing behaviors in each other that generate mistrust, foster disrespect and reduce cooperation.

Others' trust in us, respect for us and willingness to cooperate with us develop based on how we regard them. We trust, respect and cooperate with people when we feel regarded as equals. When we arrive at any meeting with an outward mindset — considering others' ideas, thoughts and concerns equal to our own — we invite them to regard us, our ideas, thoughts and concerns in the same manner. Mutual trust, respect and collaborative problem-solving are more likely to develop by showing up with an outward mindset because we create the conditions for others to adopt an outward mindset as well.

Helping things go right

Building relationships among the superintendent, board members, teachers, parents, students, the community, business owners and policy-makers is necessary for a system to work correctly and smoothly. Tension and adversarial relationships between any of these stakeholders may ripple throughout a district, with negative outcomes that could include ineffective implementations, reduced community support, disengaged parents and increased employee turnover. Each of these consequences affect children.

The Arbing Institute has developed a model of helping things go right, called The Influence Pyramid. We can either spend our time, talent and resources helping things go



THE INFLUENCE PYRAMID

right or end up in a position of dealing with things that are going wrong. As the pyramid illustrates, the basis for helping things go right is our own outward mindset allowing us to build the relationships that invite all parties into a collaborative viewpoint where listening and learning are possible. By adopting an outward mindset, we are able to listen, learn, teach, communicate and provide lasting corrections. When we happen to be inward, we may find ourselves spending more time correcting people and having less time to help things go right.

■ Connecting to board governance

By the nature of their elected position, school board members can find themselves serving with and for others who have opposing views about governance. Superintendents experience a changed governance landscape when new board members are elected. Superintendents and board members no longer have the

established relationships that existed with the departing members. This isn't a bad thing; it's simply a new thing. The tension of this new situation can induce an urgency for action that can turn any of us inward.

Effective leadership and the most positive outcomes happen when we are aware of the needs of others and our impact on them. It is essential that building relationships through developing an outward mindset becomes a central part of how the board and superintendent choose to do the business of school. Creating mutual trust,

respect and collaborative problem-solving relationships between the board, superintendent, teachers, parents, students, community, business owners and policymakers supports each other's success and will allow us to collectively achieve our shared goal of student success. ■

Jo Miller is the opening presenter at the WASB Summer Leadership Institute July 8-9, 2022, in La Crosse. School board members and superintendents will build awareness of their own mindset through a series of activities. They will also be introduced to ways to move from an inward to outward mindset to help build productive, collaborative relationships.

Outward Mindset Workshop

Learn how to develop an outward mindset on June 22-23, 2022, at CESA 8 in Gillett, Wis. Arbinger Institute Master Facilitator Mike Merchant will lead a two-day **Developing and Implementing an Outward Mindset** workshop. Register for the event on Myquickreg, at bit.ly/36P3EcD, or email Jo Miller at jmiller@cesa8.org.

For more information about Arbinger and its services, products and offerings, please visit Arbinger.com.



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AN INTRODUCTION TO School Board Governance

School districts depend on good governance. Different districts may make different governance choices, but there are key components of effective governance that apply to all public education governing school boards.

The foundation of good governance comes when a school board and superintendent make a commitment to work as an effective team.

In a time of frequent turnover of board members and superintendents, it is of utmost importance to develop

a shared understanding of what effective governance looks like.

We can all think of a time we witnessed a well-run meeting. The agenda was agreed upon by the members, norms were followed by all individuals, professional dialogue was evident and appropriate action by the full board was taken on items of importance. School board meetings like this, if done consistently, are an example of a commitment to effective governance.

A school board/superintendent team that is unified with a common

purpose and vision for the school district can work together as a unified team.

In “*The Governance Core*,” Davis Campbell and Michael Fullan write, “Highly effective governance requires a well-defined governance infrastructure that provides definition, guidance and direction.”

Effective governance identifies student achievement as the primary focus. It is the moral imperative of individuals coming together that drives the work of the organization. Thus, a commitment to effective

Effective governance teams adopt a clear set of board operating procedures for communication and decision-making.

governance — in addition to the relentless focus on the work that drives continuous improvement in student achievement — are major components of effective governance.

Policies, norms and operating procedures are essential elements within effective governance practices. The board/superintendent team is clear on their roles and responsibilities while working collaboratively with mutual trust. Effective governance teams adopt a clear set of board operating procedures for communication and decision-making. Members hold one another accountable for the functions of the system, not only with actions but also for results.

Effective boards recognize public education's impact on the commu-

nity and understand how strong connections mean everyone is invested in successful schools. Communication and transparency are common expectations of the public, so effective governing boards convey their concerns and actions publicly. They build support within the community by hearing the public's concerns and expectations. Effective governance teams are liaisons to the community and establish an effective communication structure to engage their community in the vision and strategic goals of the school district.

In summary, governing teams that demonstrate commitment to effective governance put student achievement as their primary focus. Each member is clear on their roles and responsibilities, and they engage

their community by establishing an effective communication structure. Effective governance is taking responsibility for student outcomes by holding each other and the entire system accountable for continuous improvement.

As new board members and superintendents join your governance team, it may be time for a fresh look at governing practices. Reflecting upon the components of effective governance would be a wonderful place to start.

The WASB offers a variety of learning opportunities for members seeking to improve their governance team. For further information, contact Louise Blankenheim, director of search and governance consulting services, at 920-286-1864. ■



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Photo credit: Hoffman Construction

Solar has proven to be the most cost-effective way of achieving energy independence, carbon neutrality and net-zero energy use.



Jody Andres

Mark Hanson

SOLAR 101:

Realizing the Rewards

There's a common Chinese proverb that says, "The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now." It could be similarly said about integrating solar energy into our schools.

Early solar adopters were visionaries focused on bringing renewable energy into Wisconsin schools. They focused first on education; any financial benefit was secondary.

The good news is that the early installations are still functioning

well, and many of those early adopters continue to grow their systems and capabilities. Their students and communities have realized the rewards.

On-site solar photovoltaic and battery energy storage systems should be considered with every new school construction or remodeling project. They should also be contemplated as a stand-alone option for existing schools. Solar continues to be the most cost-effective way of working toward larger goals of

overall sustainability, energy independence, carbon neutrality and net-zero energy use.

How can schools use solar energy?

Solar photovoltaic cells transform sunlight into electricity. Solar mounting options provide flexibility for both new and existing schools, with rooftop, ground-mount and car port mounting all viable choices.

Battery energy storage systems are charged from surplus solar production when more power is gener-

ated than the school needs at that moment. This stored power can be used later, such as overnight or especially during high-cost, peak power periods. Additionally, batteries can be charged from the electrical grid during low-cost, non-peak hours.

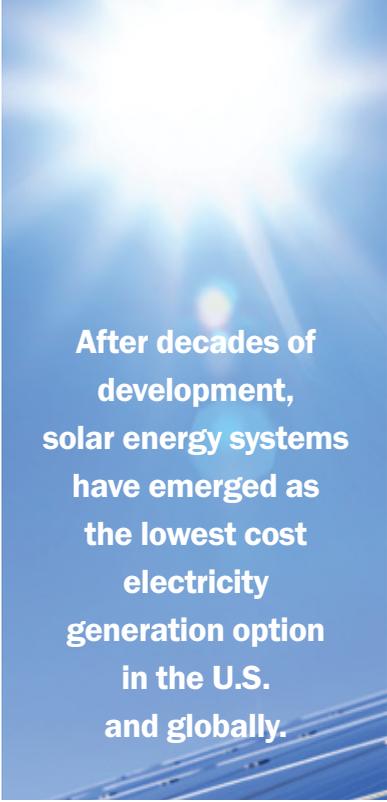
Solar and battery energy storage technologies have advanced significantly in the last 10 years, becoming highly feasible options for school districts.

Incorporating energy storage with solar adds flexibility to a building's energy management system. With the addition of micro-grids, battery storage can also be used for emergency power during outages on the electrical grid. Because of the intermittent generation provided by solar (and also wind generation), battery systems are rapidly expanding to help fill the gaps when sufficient renewable energy is not available. They are being included in both utility-scale solar projects and on-site solar projects.

Costs for both solar and battery systems continue to drop as manufacturing volumes increase and technology improves.

■ Saving money with solar

Overall costs of solar installations dropped significantly in recent years, and the market is rapidly expanding. The principal economic advantage of on-site solar is a lower cost of power. This benefit includes lower maintenance and operation costs along with a competitive guaranteed



After decades of development, solar energy systems have emerged as the lowest cost electricity generation option in the U.S. and globally.

cost rate for future electricity.

Solar systems have emerged after decades of development as the lowest cost electricity generation option in the U.S. and globally.

Previous Wisconsin school solar projects often used grants or raised funds locally. Three current grant programs are:

- The Wisconsin Solar on Schools Program is managed by the Midwest Renewable Energy Association with the support of the Couillard Solar Foundation.
- The Wisconsin Focus on Energy Program.
- The Energy Innovation Grant Program uses Department of

Energy funds and is administered by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin.

It is worth noting that global crises, including the supply chain disruptions from the pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, are causing some near-term turbulence in acquiring and pricing new solar and battery system installations. While solar prices may fluctuate, there will be upward pressure on costs for its main competitor: natural gas. This suggests that solar will become even more advantageous economically.

It is important to consider green-minded investors who might provide up-front dollars along with grants and leveraging federal tax credits. Third-party investors have been used in recent solar projects. The Wisconsin Office of Energy Innovation has done splendid work and been supportive through their grant programs. Be sure to investigate all economic options for your area when considering your next project.

The benefits don't stop with financial rewards. There are many additional advantages for our communities and students.

■ Solar as an educational tool

Solar and battery systems can provide a real-time, interactive educational platform for students that supports STEM. Many schools have capitalized upon this to benefit the community and students. These systems can also prove to be a prompt for discussions in math, finance, sociology, civics and political science.

In many communities, school districts are the first organization to use significant solar power. This has opened eyes to more sustainable options for businesses, nonprofits and government entities.

Throughout much of the United States, renewable energy jobs are rapidly rising. Exposing students to these emerging systems opens their minds to new concepts and gives them an advantage in their career



Choices in solar mounting — including ground, car port, and rooftop — offer flexibility to districts looking to add a solar array to their schools.

Photo credit: Hoffman Construction

considerations ... if the curriculum provides for it.

Initiatives like the American Institute of Architects' Climate Action Plan, as well as emerging federal and state goals for a zero-carbon economy by 2050, can be used as teaching tools. Your students can be in a leading position to develop and implement the technologies to address these goals. In addition, informing students of the fundamentals of these technologies already available through a hands-on learning approach, paired with a strong environmental curriculum, is a brilliant way to challenge their minds, create interest and prepare them for the path ahead.

Regulations impede progress

The adoption of solar in Wisconsin schools could advance further and faster if the state supports distributed solar equally with utility centralized solar. Current laws and regulations are holding us back from recognizing all the potential for solar in Wisconsin, including for schools.

The Midwest Renewable Energy Association filed a lawsuit in Wisconsin Circuit Court in February 2021 to remove obstacles preventing Wisconsinites from benefiting from



The success the Northland Pines School District enjoyed with their previous solar projects encouraged them to add the technology to their only school without solar. (Photo credit: Dan Dumas, Kim Swisher Communications, LLC)

clean energy development.

The association's filing requests the court to make certain that the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin focuses on regulating monopoly utility companies and does not illegally impede competitive clean energy alternatives for Wisconsin businesses and families.

MREA's lawsuit specifically challenges policies that suppress Wis-

consin's clean energy economy. It addresses issues which impede financing options that would make solar more affordable. Additionally, it would eliminate a current order that prevents Wisconsin businesses and homes from utilizing market incentives to reduce their power consumption during peak hours. Resolving these issues would reduce the cost of energy to Wisconsin citizens.



SOLAR SCHOOL LEADERS

Northland Pines School District in Vilas County recently received bids for a 70 kW-dc system and approximately 60 kW-ac/150 kWh battery system to be installed at their St. Germain Elementary School.

The district had previously worked with Hoffman to install 430 kW-dc of solar at three other schools, as seen in the photo on page 21. The outcomes of these previous projects persuaded the district to add a solar and battery system at their only school lacking solar.

They understand that gaining experience with battery systems is useful as they aim for zero net energy in the future. The benefits of their previous solar projects included financial savings and providing on-site platforms for renewable energy education.

Due to limited summer school use, an important feature of the St. Germain design is to focus on winter generation with the use of bi-facial solar modules at a steep angle (approximately 50 degrees). Bi-facial modules generate additional power from reflected light on the back side of the module. This back-side power, combined with the steep angle, sheds snow to boost winter power generation. To spread the power generation



■ What's next?

Zero net energy school design is the next frontier. In such a building, the total amount of energy used annually by the facility is equal to the amount of renewable energy created on site.

In Wisconsin, this typically involves combining energy-efficient, geothermal schools with sufficient solar and battery systems to meet all energy demands. A related

development is the increased use of adjustable angle, bi-facial solar to enhance winter production. This progress allows a school to move away from natural gas and the associated environmental emissions.

■ Taking the next step

All of us can take the next step toward greater sustainability. If you are planning a new construction or remodeling

project, how can you incorporate solar? If a construction project isn't in your future, explore how solar could be integrated in your current physical plant. If you were an early adopter, have you considered a battery system to enhance your solar system? If you're capitalizing on the financial savings, but not equipping students for exciting careers, it's time to implement a relevant curriculum into your culture.

Foster the spirit of curiosity and innovation that we desire in our students. Imagine how you can move towards zero net energy. Let's all take the next step and reap the rewards — financially, environmentally and educationally. ■

Mark Hanson, PhD, LEED AP BD+C, is director of sustainable services at Hoffman Planning, Design & Construction, Inc., in Appleton, Wis. Before joining Hoffman, Dr. Hanson served as the executive director of the Energy Center of Wisconsin. (mhanson@hoffman.net)

Jody Andres, AIA LEED AP, is a senior project architect and the K-12 market leader at Hoffman Planning, Design & Construction, Inc. He has worked with more than 60 school districts on preK-12 educational facilities, providing needs assessment, planning, programming and design services. (jandres@hoffman.net)

over more hours during the day the project is using three orientations: southeast, south and southwest. This reduces the need to store energy or sell power to the grid at midday. The batteries will store spare generation for use later.

A school district in southern Wisconsin recently opened a 126,000-square-foot elementary school. The primary requirement related to sustainability of the new elementary school was to be a zero-energy building. It is the first net-zero energy school in the state of Wisconsin, offsetting 100% of all on-site energy needs. The 646kW DC/500kW AC rooftop solar system and geothermal heating and cooling system are also leveraged as educational tools for the school as well as the community at large. An interesting feature includes a viewing area to see the roof-mounted system. According to the school's website, in one year the solar panel system alone offsets carbon emissions equivalent to the electrical usage of 96.4 homes, an average passenger vehicle

driving 1,403,553 miles or burning 623,249 pounds of coal.

Another example can be found in a planned 400 kW-dc solar ground-mounted solar field

and approximately 110 kW-ac/110 kWh battery system for the new Clintonville Middle School and the adjoining existing high school. The middle school will also capitalize upon a geothermal system (ground-sourced heat pump HVAC system) allowing it to be the second net-zero energy school in Wisconsin. The solar acquisition is using third-party investors while the battery system is funded by a Wisconsin Office of Energy Innovation grant. The batteries will store solar energy for peak demand arbitrage and shaving. This will allow them to purchase less costly power overnight to use the following day when prices are highest. The Clintonville Public School District is deeply interested in the educational benefits as well as the financial savings. □



YOUTH RECOMMENDED Mental Health CHANGES

Young people want adults they can trust to talk with about their mental health, and they want to expand how mental health is defined to include the whole person. These are just two of 11 recommendations from the Wisconsin Office of Children's Mental Health in their Youth Listening Session Recommendations for Action.

The OCMH Resiliency Impact Team, comprised of mental health professionals, people with experience, advocates and young people, developed the guidance after a series of listening sessions with Wisconsin youth. The sessions allowed individuals to voice their ideas to strengthen mental health supports in Wisconsin. Prompting the recommendations

was the increasing rates of anxiety, depression and lack of belonging the youth population is experiencing, even before the pandemic. That led many organizations to declare a national emergency in child and adolescent mental health, a concern that has been reinforced by the U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy in his Advisory on Protecting Youth Mental Health.

Gathering youth voice

In 2020, youth from across Wisconsin joined in two virtual listening sessions hosted by the Office of Children's Mental Health and led by young people. The first conversation invited young people to discuss how they find social and emotional wellness, exploring what makes teens anxious, what makes them depressed, and the biggest mental health issues for young people.

The second conversation focused on mental health in schools.

"I'm always impressed by how straightforward, articulate and insightful young people are," said Linda Hall, director of the Office of Children's Mental Health. "They have ideas, and they want to help lead in developing and implementing solutions. We need to listen more to youth and then do something with what they tell us."

Developing the recommendations

The verbatim comments youth made were given to the office's Resiliency Team. They were analyzed with a human-centered design process — a framework for understanding problems and imagining possible solutions that involves, at every step, the perspective of the people close to the issue.

"The human-centered design process was the perfect tool for us," said Molly Doreza, co-chair of the Resiliency Team. "In this process, the youth were the experts, and we needed to honor what they said, not reinterpret their responses."

Meeting monthly, the Resiliency Team meticulously followed the human-centered design process.



Source: *The Impact of COVID-19 on Pediatric Mental Health — As Study of Private Healthcare Claims*

Insight statements were developed before ideas were generated and prioritized.

"It may sound like a simple process now, but we poured through each step very carefully to arrive at

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CHRISTINA A. KATT
ATTORNEY

Christina focuses on advising school districts on a variety of aspects of labor and employment law. She regularly provides guidance on personnel policies, discipline issues, and discrimination concerns. Christina previously spent 13 years in private practice with a focus in litigation and employment law.

Youth need trustworthy, reliable adults who create safe spaces for [students] to talk about mental health.

the recommendations,” Doreza said. “The result is a solid list of insights and recommendations that are from the youth who originally shared their thoughts in those listening sessions.”

Gaining support

The office’s Youth Listening Sessions Recommendations for Action have the support of Wisconsin First Lady Kathy Evers.

“Young people want to share their thoughts on youth mental health and have important things to say,” she said. “I am pleased to work with OCMH to raise youth voices on how to improve mental health.”

Recommending action

The Youth Listening Session Recommendations for Action offers six insights and 11 recommendations for action. The insights are:

1. Youth value a safe and diverse school culture that acknowledges mental health stigma and marginalization and supports trusting relationships.
2. Youth value just, diverse and inclusive cultures and systems that normalize mental health and recognize it as a part of everyday lives.

3. Youth want to lead and guide training, services and system structure to ensure diverse representation and social justice.

4. Youth need trustworthy, reliable adults who create safe spaces for them to talk about mental health. They want supportive adults who are educated in mental health and informed about resources available. They want schools to have a diverse group of supportive adults so they can find someone who shares one or more of their identities, so as to better understand them and their experience.

5. Mental health education is needed for young people on a continuum across grades, lifespan and in all parts of the educational continuum.

6. Young people need to have the knowledge and skills to be able to self-advocate and to support their peers who are experiencing mental health challenges while maintaining boundaries.

The Recommendations for Action fall into three categories: organization/culture, youth voice and mental health education.

In the first category, the OCMH recommends advocating for policies that normalize mental health (such as mental health days and integrating mental health into wellness). The office wants youth to be part of developing guidance on mental health policies.

Wisconsin school facilities should accommodate mental health needs of youth. For example, create spaces that are safe for students (e.g., multi-sensory rooms, spaces to process and seek a friendly person).

Recruitment processes should accommodate the skills of diverse applicants. Recruit for positions in different ways, with active outreach to reach diverse populations.

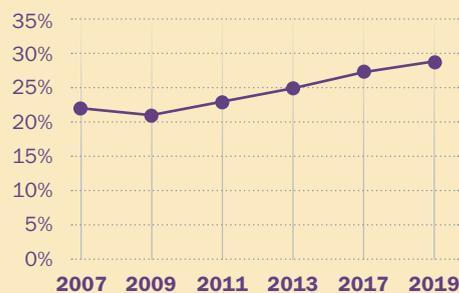
Trusted adults should understand and relate to students’ mental health. Youth should have the ability to hold adults accountable.

Regarding youth voice, we should create youth leadership opportunities in school as well as community organizations (e.g., youth seat on school board, formal participation in school governance, teaching youth how to lead their Individual Education Plans). These positions must reflect shared power and not be token roles on committees/etc. Adults should support youth in leadership roles.



Students feeling sad or hopeless

almost every day (ages 13-18)



Source: 2019 Youth Risk Behaviors Survey

There should also be opportunities for discussion on culture, identities and diversity.

Mental health education is important for the broad range of people who work with youth, including teachers, school administrators, providers and nonprofit staff.

Adults should know about the mental health resources available to youth. They should share them and prioritize social emotional learning for younger children.

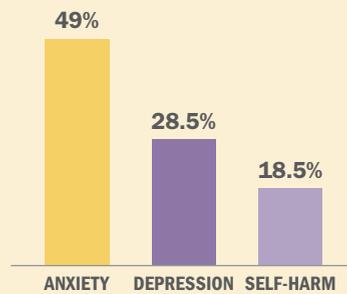
The definition of mental health should expand to include the whole person (eating, feeling, learning, etc.). Connect mental health to other activities and to the school curriculum.

Alongside each of the recommendations in the Recommendations for Action document are resources and examples to aid implementation. Read the Youth Listening Session Recommendations for Action at bit.ly/3vgMfmm.



Self-Reported Rates of Anxiety, Depression and Self-Harm

(ages 13-18)



Source: 2019 Youth Risk Behaviors Survey

A challenge to act

By releasing the Youth Listening Session Recommendations for Action, the Office of Children's Mental Health hopes to challenge organizations and individuals to consider how best to incorporate them into policy, practice and culture.

"These action recommendations offer concrete practice and policy steps that communities can take to improve the mental health of young people," Hall said. "We are hopeful many organizations will take them to heart, have conversations about them and implement those that align with their work."

"This report gives our youth voices the credibility that they deserve," added Annie Leffel, a young adult partner who participated in the youth listening sessions. "We all know the importance of speaking up for ourselves and others, and this report is a great step in furthering that conversation." ■

Karen Katz is the operations lead for the Wisconsin Office of Children's Mental Health.

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JULY 8 – 9 | RADISSON HOTEL | LA CROSSE

This two-day conference focuses on how a strong governing team can help your district's children succeed. Visit WASB.org for details and registration information.



FRIDAY, JULY 8 | WELCOME AND KEYNOTE

Our Mindset: Stories We Tell Ourselves

Jo Miller will describe how the path to student success runs through turning outward and focusing on the needs of others.



Jo Miller

How we view other people and their needs is the bedrock of culture. It can become a source of organizational excellence or a barrier to change.

JoAnn (Jo) Miller is the director of continuous improvement at CESA 8.

FRIDAY, JULY 8 | MAIN SESSION

Elevating Achievement for All Children: A Focus on Excellence and Equity

School districts are facing mounting resistance to equitable delivery of student instruction and other opportunities for student growth.



Dan Nerad

This workshop will share how to frame our work with a simultaneous, dual focus on excellence and equity for all children.

Dan Nerad and Louise Blankenheim are former Wisconsin superintendents and WASB consultants.



Louise Blankenheim

FRIDAY, JULY 8 | SPECIAL DINNER PRESENTATION

In this optional Friday dinner presentation, Viterbo Professor Tom Thibodeau will discuss the positive power of servant leadership. Separate registration required.



Tom Thibodeau

Tom Thibodeau founded the Master of Arts in Servant Leadership at Viterbo University.

SATURDAY, JULY 9 | MAIN SESSION

School Board and Superintendents Working Together: A Governance Mindset

Effective school governance is driven by a team with a common vision and driven by a shared moral imperative.



George Steffen



Cheryl Stinski

Participants will understand the elements of good governance, including mindset, communication strategies, preparation, the moral imperative and strategic alignment.



Patti Vickman

George Steffen, Cheryl Stinski and Patti Vickman are governance consultants at the WASB with collective experience in district administration, governance and conflict resolution.



Business Honor Roll

The WASB is now accepting nominations for the 2022 Business Honor Roll.

School boards can submit the names of up to five local businesses, including newspapers or other media, that have been helpful to your school district over the past year.

Nominated businesses will be posted on the WASB website, and districts will be provided a sample press release and personalized certificate to give their businesses.

Visit WASB.org to nominate a business.

2023 WISCONSIN STATE EDUCATION CONVENTION



January 18-20, 2023

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June Is the Last Month to Submit 2023 State Education Convention Proposals

The **Joint State Education Convention**, to be held in Milwaukee, Jan. 18-20, 2023, presents your opportunity to highlight your innovative programs and talented students.

If your district has results worth sharing, consider submitting a proposal. We are looking for breakout sessions and School Fair proposals that feature innovative projects and initiatives.

Breakout session proposals are due Friday, June 24.

Visit WASB.org/convention to learn more and submit a proposal.

Upcoming Online Events

► HIRING TEACHERS

JUNE 7 | 12-1 p.m.

This webinar provides a general overview on the process for hiring teachers. It includes information on position descriptions, posting of vacancy notices, application forms, the interview process (including virtual interviews), contract provisions pertaining to layoffs, reference checks, furloughs, the number of contract days, and state and federal laws as they relate to employment discrimination.

Register on our Online Events page at WASB.org.

The fee for webinars is \$55 per member.

► WASB LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE VIDEO UPDATE

JUNE 15 | **JULY 20** | 12 p.m.

WASB attorneys and government relations staff provide a complimentary monthly update on recent legal and legislative issues. Find the link to join on the Online Events page. *No registration required.*

WASB CIVIL RIGHTS TRAINING

Staff training on the civil rights of students and employees



School districts have the legal

responsibility to carry out numerous state and federal laws protecting the civil rights of students and employees.

The WASB has partnered with the law firm Boardman & Clark to create a series of training modules to help districts navigate legal and practical civil rights issues for their students and employees.

Districts that subscribe receive access to all webinars and presentation materials in the series.

EMPLOYEE-FOCUSED MODULES

- Age-Based Discrimination
- Religious-Based Discrimination and Accommodation
- Race-Based Employment Discrimination and Harassment
- National Origin and Ancestry Discrimination
- First Amendment Rights
- Sex, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Discrimination and Harassment
- Identifying Employees with Disabilities and Providing Accommodations
- Arrest and Conviction Discrimination

STUDENT-FOCUSED MODULES

- Special Education Overview
- Section 504 and ADA Overview
- Race-Based Discrimination
- National Origin Discrimination
- Title IX Overview
(Note: separate, in-depth training on Title IX remains available for staff)
- Free Speech Rights
- Rights of Homeless Students
- Religious Freedom

Election-Year Advocacy Opportunity: Candidate Forums

When well-planned, these events can inform communities, build support for K-12 issues



Campaign season has begun. This year, preK-12 education issues will feature prominently in many candidates' platforms. Races will also be affected by legislative redistricting, with redrawn district boundaries reflecting changes observed in the once-a-decade federal census.

With the new maps, a near-record 30 lawmakers have announced they will not be seeking re-election to their current seats. This degree of turnover means many school leaders will be seeing new faces representing their school districts in January. It also means now is a great time for school leaders to get to know their potential lawmakers better.

Odd-numbered state Senate seats and all state Assembly seats are up for reelection this fall. A great way for your school district to play an active role in the election (and provide an important community service!) is to host a candidate forum. A forum engages your community around an upcoming election, builds support for the issues that matter to your school district, and informs you about the candidates running to represent you.

You may want to consider partnering with your neighboring school districts in this effort if you share a legislative district in common. That way you can maximize attendance and interest in the forum and increase the likelihood candidates will want to participate as they will have a chance to meet more of their voters.

■ Guide for successful candidate forums

Plan ahead — Pick a time and date to host your forum. Avoid business hours, religious or government holidays or dates when other community functions are scheduled. A school building makes an ideal site, but make sure you have adequate seating.

Invite candidates — Legislative district boundaries typically determine which legislators/candidates to invite and which neighboring school districts to partner with. Send an invitation letter well before the planned event and follow up with a phone call. For candidate forums, candidate contact information is available on the Wisconsin Elections Commission website at <http://elections.wi.gov/>. Since this would be a campaign-related event, send invites to incumbents' campaign or home address rather than their Capitol office. The earlier you schedule your candidate forum, the better. Schedules typically get more crowded the closer you get to the date of the primary or general election.

This year's primary election is August 9. A primary is held in a race with two or more candidates from the same political party. It serves to narrow the field so that a single candidate from each party advances to the general election on Nov. 8. If there is a primary for one or more seats in your region, it can be helpful to organize and hold your candidate forum in advance of the primary.

Choose a format — There are numerous ways to structure a candidate forum including:

- Candidates give prepared remarks, and attendees ask follow-up questions from microphones in the audience.
- Candidates are asked prepared questions on legislation or themes important to public education and your community.
- Candidates are asked questions that the audience submits on index cards. At the end, candidates provide closing statements, with an equal amount of time given to each candidate.

In any format, you'll need a moderator to introduce the candidates, start the dialogue, keep the discussion moving, and screen the questions submitted by audience members, if that is the method you select. Ask a well-known, nonpartisan member of your community to serve in this role — a school administrator, school board president or a local media person are common examples.

Generate interest — As mentioned previously, consider partnering with neighboring school districts or even your local municipal officials. Working together with other districts allows you to reach more people and gain more exposure. Working with local municipal governments broadens the content areas that will be discussed

As a trusted, nonpartisan voice in the community, your school board and school district are uniquely suited to host a legislative/candidate forum.

and brings in additional interest and will also allow you to reach more people and gain more exposure. Inform the local media about the forum as well as any parent, teacher and other civic groups who may be interested in attending.

Spread the word using newsletters, social media, local newspapers and/or local television or radio outlets. The WASB can also help promote your event.

Send a media advisory notifying the news media about your event at least a week in advance. Consider allocating central, unobstructed space close to electrical outlets for TV camera crews and TV and radio reporters to cover your event.

Keep it fair and nonpartisan — As a trusted, nonpartisan voice in the community, your school board and school district are uniquely suited to host a legislative/candidate forum. Working in your selected format and with your moderator, try to ensure each legislator/candidate has equal time/opportunity to react to each issue or question.

Make sure to invite all major-party candidates in that election. Make a thorough and good-faith effort to ensure the participation of at least two candidates for a specific office, but you may proceed with a forum if only one candidate accepts. Provide the questions in advance to give candidates a chance to educate themselves and prepare a substantive response. Remember: candidates can become the lawmakers you will need to have a relationship with after the election. If there is no incumbent or if a challenger wins, your forum will have provided you a great opportunity to begin developing a relationship of trust before the winner is elected.

Again, if only one candidate attends, make clear to attendees and in your advertising that other candidates or parties were invited to participate, naming names, and giving reasons for nonparticipation, quoting invitees. If no reason is given for nonparticipation, then state that. This

avoids the impression that you are taking a partisan stance by omission.

Take notes — During the forum, make note of the candidates' positions and any commitments they provide. This will be useful in future communications and allow you to better hold them accountable for their votes.

Follow up — Send thank-you letters to the participating candidates, any school district staff who assisted in making the arrangements, the moderator, timer, and any other volunteers.

■ WASB resolutions due Sept. 15

Your board can play a role in determining the WASB's policy positions. The Delegate Assembly is months away, but now is the time to begin thinking about your resolutions.

The annual deadline for submitting board resolutions to the WASB for consideration to become official policies or positions for the Association is Sept. 15, which may seem far away. But remember, before a resolution can be submitted, it must be officially voted on and approved by your board.

The WASB strives to be a member-driven organization. Our posi-

tions on policy issues are determined by resolutions adopted by the WASB Delegate Assembly, which meets annually at the time of the State Education Convention in January. The resolutions adopted by school board member delegates at the Delegate Assembly become official positions of the WASB, are published in our Resolution Book, and remain in force until amended or repealed.

Individual boards initiate this process by adopting board resolutions on various K-12 education-related topics and submitting them to the WASB by a Sept. 15 deadline.

Once these resolution ideas are submitted, the WASB Policy and Resolutions Committee, comprised of about 25 school board members appointed each year from across the state and from within each of the 15 WASB regions, reviews and evaluates them and determines which ones will advance to the Delegate Assembly.

To ensure this is a member-driven process, your participation and careful attention are important. For more information, access the "Delegate Assembly" webpage on WASB.org. ■

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The Latest on Race Discrimination Under Federal and State Law

State and federal laws prohibit discrimination against students on the basis of certain classifications, including race, color and national origin. Such prohibited conduct also extends to harassment against students on the basis of these protected categories. Recently, in Wisconsin, a number of school districts have received complaints regarding student discrimination and harassment involving race. Of course, such conduct toward students not only impacts the educational culture for students, but also exposes districts to potential legal liability. This Legal Comment will address issues related to addressing race discrimination and harassment, including a review of the relevant federal and state laws, the standards that apply to claims of violations of the laws prohibiting racial discrimination, and recent cases addressing such issues.¹

■ Relevant laws and agencies

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (“Title VI”) prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color and national origin in any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.² The United States Department of Education has promulgated regulations to effectuate the provisions of Title VI.³ The law and regulations are enforced by the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights. The OCR is authorized to investigate alleged discriminatory conduct by school districts and to enforce Title VI and its regulations, among other discrimination laws. The OCR may reach resolutions with school districts in response to complaints of student discrimination, and may conduct compliance reviews of district compliance with these laws.

In Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Pupil Nondiscrimination Law prohibits schools from discriminating against pupils in any program or activity because of various classifications, including race, ancestry and national origin.⁴ The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has promulgated regulations to effectuate the provisions of the Pupil Nondiscrimination Law.⁵ DPI has also established a Pupil Nondiscrimination Program, and this program has various responsibilities, including providing technical assistance to school districts and others on matters related to nondiscrimination and equality of educational opportunity under state and related federal laws. This program also handles appeals of school district decisions on nondiscrimination complaints pursuant to state law.

State regulations require each public school district to have written policies that prohibit discrimination, including a complaint procedure.⁶ The policies and procedures must, at a minimum, require the district to provide written acknowledgment within 45 days of the receipt of a written complaint, and to make a determination of the complaint within 90 days of receipt of the written complaint, unless the parties agree to an extension. Every district must notify complainants of the right to appeal a negative determination by the school board to the state superintendent of public instruction and of the procedures for making the appeal.

■ OCR investigative guidance

Over the years, the OCR has issued various guidance documents to assist school districts in addressing claims of racial discrimination and harassment. In this respect, one important document is the 1994 Investigative

Guidance on “Racial Incidents and Harassment Against Students at Educational Institutions.”⁷ The OCR often relies on this Investigative Guidance when it receives complaints related to racial discrimination or harassment. Likewise, DPI often considers this Investigative Guidance when it reviews appeals of decisions of school boards related to complaints under state law. As a result, school districts should be familiar with this guidance and review such guidance when addressing any race or related equity issues.

The Investigative Guidance addresses the investigative approach and analysis that the OCR follows when investigating issues of discrimination against students based on alleged racial incidents, including allegations of (1) different treatment of students based on race and (2) harassment of students based on race. DPI has also adopted this approach and analysis. Discrimination includes conduct based on race that consists of different treatment of students on the basis of race by school district agents or employees acting within the scope of their official duties. Such discrimination might occur when a school district administers discipline in a discriminatory manner, such as when similarly situated students of different races are disciplined differently for the same offense. The Investigative Guidance sets forth a detailed analytical framework for schools in determining whether the school has treated a student differently on the basis of race without a legitimate, nondiscriminatory reason. Schools should consider this guidance when faced with such issues.

Discrimination can also include harassment based on race. Harassment is conduct against students that

creates a hostile educational or learning environment. In this respect, in order to establish a violation of Title VI under the hostile environment theory, the OCR and DPI will examine (1) whether the conduct was sufficiently severe, pervasive or persistent so as to interfere with or limit the ability of an individual to participate in or benefit from the services or activities of the educational institution; (2) whether the educational institution had actual or constructive notice of the racially hostile environment; and (3) whether the educational institution failed to respond adequately to redress the racially hostile environment. In its guidance, the OCR has stated that the determination of whether racial harassment is severe, pervasive or persistent will take into consideration the context, nature, scope, frequency, duration and location of racial incidents, as well as the identity, number and relationships of the persons involved. Infrequent incidents may not rise to a claim, although the incidents may still be regarded as unacceptable by the school district. Such conduct can be handled as a violation of the district's code of conduct, even though it doesn't meet the legal elements for harassment.

DPI review of school board decisions

As mentioned, DPI has the authority to review appeals of discrimination based on race under state law after the matter has been decided by a school district. In its review, DPI is typically informed by guidance promulgated by the OCR related to Title VI and will often consider decisions issued by the OCR on Title VI matters when reviewing potential violations of state law. When DPI

reviews such decisions by the school board, it makes its decision based on a review of the record developed by the district during its investigation into the underlying complaint. As a result, DPI is necessarily limited to the record offered by the district on appeal. There is not an opportunity for the school district to augment the record or to submit legal arguments as to why the district complied with state law. DPI will conclude discrimination occurred or did not occur based on the evidence the district compiled during the investigation stage. This approach makes a careful, thorough and well-documented investigation of student discrimination and harassment complaints a priority consideration.

DPI has recently issued decisions related to its review on appeal of school district decisions based on racial discrimination and harassment. These decisions provide insight into how DPI may decide future appeals involving similar issues, including the emphasis that DPI places on a district complying with its applicable policies. One recent decision involved the Burlington Area School District.⁸ In this case, a parent alleged various discriminatory practices, including that the district discriminated against her child in three ways: (1) that the district treated her child differently than similarly situated students; (2) that suspension rates for Black students were 25 times higher than suspension rates for white students; and (3) that her children were subjected to verbal harassment. Although DPI did not find discrimination under the first two claims, DPI found violations by the district related to the harassment allegations. DPI relied significantly on the OCR's guidance in its analysis and

on the OCR's decisions involving other Wisconsin school districts. Although the decision is heavily redacted to protect student confidentiality, the unredacted portion provides useful analysis that is helpful to districts that face similar claims.

In that case, many of the allegations raised by the complainant related to a general complaint that there was a racially hostile environment at the district and the district failed to adequately redress that hostile environment. DPI noted that a student discipline report reflected 19 discipline incidents involving "BULLYING RACE" documented by the district during the relevant school years (2016-2020). It also noted that there were additional incidents of racial harassment that occurred during this time period, but DPI was unable to determine the exact number and severity of the additional incidents. Nevertheless, based on the nature and number of instances where students were subjected to racial comments and slurs over the course of four years, DPI determined that racial harassment at the district was severe, pervasive and persistent during the relevant period. In addition, according to DPI, the district had actual notice of the racially hostile environment, especially considering its own student discipline reports and the concerns brought to the attention of administration in these instances.

DPI also concluded that the district failed to adequately respond to the racially hostile environment. With respect to the district's response, DPI stated that, although the district responded to certain discrete allegations involving the student, the district did not take the further step of considering or investigating whether the environment in the district was

DPI will not just evaluate whether a district complied with the law, but also whether the district complied with its own internal policies and processes.

DPI has the authority to review appeals of discrimination based on race under state law after the matter has been decided by a school district.

racially hostile for the student in particular or the student's peers globally. DPI also noted that during correspondence between the parent and the district, the district did not direct the parent to the formal process for filing discrimination complaints. Further, DPI concluded that, although the district took actions to address racial harassment, the actions were not reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and were not effective when viewed cumulatively. According to DPI, discipline was not uniformly imposed, and there was a significant absence of any district-wide consideration of how to address underlying causes of the harassment and ensure such racial harassment would not continue.

Another recent case involved the Cedarburg School District.⁹ In that case, the parent's child, a biracial student at the district's high school, reported to the vice principal that a fellow student (Student A) had made alleged inappropriate comments, including that Student A would drive a vehicle through Black Lives Matter protestors if Student A ever went to a protest. The vice principal followed up on the issue, including speaking to Student A and reporting Student A's actions to Student A's parent. After this incident, a parent of the biracial student filed a complaint, alleging various incidents that allegedly constituted a racially hostile environment. An independent investigator conducted an investigation and determined that there was no evidence of racial harassment or bullying.

On appeal, DPI concluded that the district did not adequately respond to the allegations. In particular, the district failed to comply with its discrimination complaint policies when the vice principal conducted an informal investigation

of alleged pupil harassment instead of referring the matter to a district compliance officer. In addition, according to DPI, upon receiving a formal discrimination complaint, the district failed to develop the facts necessary to make a determination whether the alleged conduct occurred. As a result, DPI found that the district's investigation into the alleged racially hostile environment was deficient. The district was then ordered to submit a corrective action plan to specify steps it will take to ensure future compliance with its discrimination policies and procedures and to conduct an appropriate investigation into the alleged racially hostile environment in the district. An important takeaway from this case is that DPI will not just evaluate whether a district complied with the law, but also whether the district complied with its own internal policies and processes.

Conclusion

School districts are certainly aware of the heightened attention given to racial harassment of students. Therefore, districts must continue to be attentive to the conduct of students and respond appropriately in these situations. Such practices will not only protect districts from liability, but they will also help foster a positive school climate for students, staff and the greater school community.

School districts should consider these recent DPI decisions and take steps to review their policies and ensure that they are being followed when alleged discrimination or harassment might occur within the district. Failure to follow such policies can result in a complaint and correction plan from DPI. Individuals can also pursue a court action for any district's alleged failure to address any alleged student discrimination or

harassment. To avoid liability, districts must continue to investigate and adequately address alleged discrimination and harassment. The district's response must be tailored to redress the specific problems experienced at the district and must be reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and ensure that students are not restricted in their participation in the services or activities of the district. Examples of possible responses include imposing discipline, implementing racial awareness training and disseminating policies prohibiting harassment.

Endnotes

1. This Legal Comment was written by Michael J. Julka, Brian P. Goodman, and Richard F. Verstegen of Boardman Clark, WASB Legal Counsel. For additional information related to this topic, see *Wisconsin School News*, "Bullying and Harassment Revisited" (September 2016), "The Office of Civil Rights Use of 'Dear Colleague Letters'" (June-July 2015) and "Addressing Bullying and Harassment by Students" (August 2012).
2. 42 U.S.C. s. 2000d-1.
3. 34 C.F.R. ch. 100.
4. Wis. Stat. s. 118.13.
5. Wis. Admin. Code ch. PI 9.
6. Wis. Admin. Code s. PI 9.03 and 9.04.
7. See also Dear Colleague Letter: Harassment and Bullying, "Guidance on Schools' Obligations to Protect Students from Student-on-Student Harassment on the Basis of Sex; Race, Color and National Origin; and Disability" (October 26, 2010). Some aspects of this guidance, particularly with respect to sexual harassment, are out of date and should not be relied upon.
8. *Darnisha Garbade v. Burlington, Sch. Dist.*, DPI Case No. 20-PDA-02 (Apr. 6, 2021).
9. *Jessie Mchomvu v. Cedarburg Sch. Dist.*, DPI Case No. 21-PDA-02 (July 23, 2021).



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